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Honors College at WKU

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ARETÉ



THE SPIRIT OF ENGAGED EXCELLENCE – A PUBLICATION OF THE WKU HONORS COLLEGE

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Honors Ecology Students Hop into Research

CAMERON FRANEY

Arété staff writer

The Honors section of Biology 315 is getting a unique experience by taking part in a research project involving several frogs and toads from local regions. This ecology class works to understand relationships among living things and their environments. The class is looking at the influence, time, and location has on each species of amphibians by listening to hours of recorded audio clips and counting the number of frogs at each location.

In order to get a feel for the project as a whole, the class is taking several field

trips to a biology preserve to experience the frogs and toads firsthand. The class also has the ability to see the recording devices, called “amphibulators.”

Knowledge of the greater parts of the project will give the class greater insight when writing the paper portion of the class. The class members hope their research can one day be published.

“Listening to over 13 hours of frog calls for the data was exhausting, but, overall, I really enjoy the course,” sophomore Shouta Brown said. “The field trips are great because in ecology everything has a story, so there’s always something new to learn.”

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Faculty Spotlight: Dr. John Baker

BETHANY RIGGS

Arété staff writer

“I love every aspect of leadership,” Dr. John Baker, Education Coordinator of WKU’s Center for Leadership Excellence, said. “The teaching, the discussions, the learning—it’s all just fascinating.”

Baker serves on the Honors Development Board and teaches an Honors University Experience course, an introductory class for freshman that focuses on leadership education. He teaches several graduate-level courses in leadership as well. He is also one of the advisors of WKU’s

Rotaract Club. He also advises students majoring in organizational leadership and the Dynamic Leadership Master’s program, as well as students pursuing a Leadership Certificate.

Evansville, Ind. senior and current Rotaract Club President Sarah Moore said it has been great being able to have Baker as an advisor for the club. “He cares not just for the growth of the Rotaract Club, but for the members individually as well,” she said. “His support, participation, and guidance have been there from the beginning and have helped me personally grow in leadership through the club and in my own life.”

Baker received a Bachelor of Science degree in Interdisciplinary Studies at West Point. His first Master’s degree was in Physical Geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and his second

Master’s degree was in Engineering Management at Drexel University. Baker just recently defended his dissertation to successfully receive his doctorate from WKU in Educational Leadership. In addition to these years of schooling, Baker spent over 26 years in the U.S. Army, eventually working in the WKU ROTC Department in 2003. Three years later, he relocated to a leadership position in the Center for Leadership Excellence.

Baker’s favorite activities still revolve around physical fitness even after retiring from the Army, and his favorite hobbies include running and playing golf. He also loves to spend time with his wife Kathy, and his four

kids, Alan, Emily, Garrett, and Aaron. “My family is my biggest accomplishment,” Baker said. “And I am always trying to make sure they make the best choices.”



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DR. JOHN BAKER



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DR. STEVE HUSKEY
Dr. Baker stands with members of the WKU Rotaract Club.

“Hands” Honors senior Jennifer Keifer won first place at the national Sigma Tau Delta Convention for “Hands.” She also recently won first place in the WKU Goldenrod Poetry Contest. Keifer will be graduating in May and has been accepted into the Teach for America program upon her graduation.

Every summer when they would hide, crouching beneath the strands of wheat like straw, waiting, not breathing, for someone to find them or pass so they could dash or crawl or slink to the scarecrow—the only thing seen from the road—he would dig. Nobody bothered tagging him anymore. He was too lazy; he didn’t even try for the scarecrow. He just dug. From above there could be seen scraped patches like freckles among the field, but from the road or from the farm house only the scarecrow. He dug until he turned up only earthworms and roots and of course the upended harvest too soon, until even the sun was playing along beneath the wheat and invisible on the road amidst the young headlights. Until someone came searching.

Each night he returned home with muddy knees and muddier hands and wrists, the dirt somehow even scraped across his face sometimes and the same chiding—How on earth, how on earth—before the nightly scrubbing and supper in pajamas without dessert.

“How you manage to get this filthy every afternoon I do not understand,” his mother said.

The water became darker as he pumped his unwashed knees. He wasn’t listening. He watched the pulsing, dirty water dip

and ebb, rolling towards the white walls in boiling waves, and then tip finally above the sill of the tub and onto his mother. Screeching, she shot upward, catching her shin on the ceramic edge. He sunk lower, almost concealing his whole head. He listened to the garbled sounds of the ravenous water—his mother’s wet, distant scolding and the choppy rippling from the movement of his knees.

After his mother had scowled and scrubbed away all the dirt, he pulled the plug with his toes. She covered him with a towel. He watched the thin mud slide away from the white and down into a clean hole, twirling into a tornado of filth as it neared. Around the rim was a brown ring.

The next morning a round, large bulb hung below his mother’s knee.

Pulling the stalks out in fistfuls, he dirtied his fingernails, clawing at the dirt. Even as sweat dripped across his eyes and through his shirt, after those who could afford to had abandoned the heat to the chilled theatre, he pulled apart the earth.

“What are you doing?”

He looked up. His hands stopped. Almost transparent and blazing pink against the sun, she stood there. She wore a checkered dress, and her hair curled and frayed in the damp heat, and it snapped



PICTURED: JENNIFER KIEFER

and whipped against her face like fire. She squinted.

“What are you doing?” she asked again.

“Digging,” he said.

“For what?”

“I’m not telling you.”

“Why not?”

“Because then you’d be digging too and probably everyone else,” he said and turned back to continue.

“So it’s a secret then.” She scratched her feet through the discarded stalks behind him. “I don’t think there’s anything here. Just wheat and dirt and bugs.”

“When I do find it, I’ll be a millionaire.”

Are you creative? Do you write?
Do you write creatively?
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If you’re interested in being published in the award-winning **Areté** Honors College Newsletter, contact Audrey Gearhart at arete.layout@gmail.com.

Beyond Words: The Sigma Tau Delta Convention

AUDREY GEARHART

Areté editor

From March 24-26, Honors seniors Nikki Deese, Jennifer Keifer, and Molly Koeneman; Honors juniors Shawna Felkins and Audrey Gearhart; and club sponsor and Honors advisor Walker Rutledge participated in the annual National Sigma Tau Delta Convention held in Pittsburgh, Pa. Sigma Tau Delta is the national honors society for english majors. Keifer won first place in original fiction for her short story, "Hands," and Gearhart garnered third place in the same category for her submission, "Yellow."



PHOTO PROVIDED BY AUDREY GEARHART

Shawna Felkins, Jennifer Keifer, Audrey Gearhart, Professor Walker Rutledge, Molly Koeneman, and Nikki Deese attended the 2011 Sigma Tau Delta Conference.

"I am always surprised when I win awards," said Keifer. "I am very modest about my writing and never expect to make huge gains from it. It is always surreal to me when I win awards."

The students' presentations ranged from analytical essays to poetry, original short stories, and creative nonfiction. Presenters also participated in panel discussions with peers from across the nation.

The Convention hosted several notable writers including former United States' poet laureate, Kay Ryan, and authors Jacqueline Woodson, Lorene Cary, and Dave Eggers. All convention participants were welcome to attend readings and workshops hosted by the guest writers.

During breaks in the presentation schedule, Rutledge scheduled time for the group to visit local landmarks and memorable attractions. The group rode the Monongahela Incline, the oldest continuously operating inclined railway in the U.S., which carried steelworkers to and from work daily in the past.

"The Monongahela Incline was one of the most fun experiences of the trip," said Felkins. "We ventured out in the cold night to experience

some real history. The cars were very interesting and the descent was exciting, but nothing was more fun than the breath-taking view at the top of the hill."

Other ventures included touring the Andy Warhol Museum and the Frick Art Museum and Historical Center.

Next year's Convention will be held in New Orleans, La., where many more exciting adventures are waiting to be experienced.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY AUDREY GEARHART

Jennifer Keifer and Audrey Gearhart show off the awards they won at the conference with Professor Rutledge.

Rate Your Professors

RAMONA SUDBECK

Areté staff writer

Before signing up for classes, students can look up their prospective teachers on profeval.com if they've had any bad reviews. But what if they could rank the teachers themselves beforehand? That's exactly the opportunity the Honors College hoped to present by allowing students to "pick your professor."

This process provides for student input in interviewing the candidates for the new Honors Core curriculum classes. The Institute for Citizenship and Civil Responsibility hosted an open forum and several occasions throughout the past month inviting students to a question-and-answer session with the interviewing teachers, as well as teaching demonstrations.

Honors Freshman Molly Kaviar attended the first session and said she "... liked how it was set up, so we got to see how he would teach the class." Honors students were also invited to send their feedback to the Honors College, which will begin to hire for the positions soon.

Big Red's Trivia Bowl a Big Success

BETHANY RIGGS

Areté staff writer

"I had a blast participating," Burlington, Ky. senior Zack Ryle said. "It was run very well, and it gave the opportunity for different organizations and groups to show their knowledge in a fun environment."

On Saturday, March 19, the WKU HonorsToppers hosted the third annual Big Red's Trivia Bowl in Mass Media and Technology Hall. The rooms were decorated, and a few HonorsToppers were costumed to fit The Wizard of Oz theme. There were 22 teams that

competed, ranging from WKU students and faculty members to members of the Bowling Green community.

Each team of four to six members paid a registration fee to participate in the trivia competition and also had the opportunity to purchase t-shirts for the event. The money raised, which amounted to approximately \$1,250, benefited The Center for Courageous Kids, located in Scottsville, Ky. The HonorsToppers decided that all future Big Red's Trivia Bowl's proceeds will benefit this organization.

The winning team, entitled "Son of Non-Drowsy Formula," and the runner-up team, "Rhymes with Orange," both

received gift cards. The winning teams also received Honors College red towels.

"I can't wait to compete again next year," Owensboro, Ky. freshman Trip Carpenter said. "It was so much fun, and it was for a great cause."

Social Responsibility in Highlander

SHANNA DOWNEY

Areté staff writer

From April 8-9, eleven students, the majority of whom are in Dr. Paul Markham's Honors Social Ethics class, traveled to the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tenn., to spend the weekend discussing ways to bring social change to the campus of WKU.

Highlander, now in its 78th year of existence, has played an active role in the organization of many major social movements, including the labor movement, women's rights, and civil rights. Amongst its influential attendees are Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. During the 1950s, Highlander was one of the few places in the south that African-Americans and whites could

discuss racial inequalities in safety. In 1957, the state of Tennessee revoked the center's charter based on accusations that it was a Communist training school.

While at the Highlander Center, students attended workshops about the center's history and past visitors who made a significant impact for social change. Other workshops also focused on the Highlander methodology of change: "popular education," a learning process in which everyone is both a teacher and a learner.

The true purpose of this expedition, however, was to facilitate discussion on issues students felt most needed to change at WKU and in the Bowling Green area. These issues included lack of student participation in community service, the disconnect between diverse groups on campus, and wage

discrepancy between the rich and impoverished.

Sophomore Erin Fleischmann said, "Highlander was a great introduction to addressing social problems in Bowling Green and at WKU. It was also a way to get to know my fellow Honors classmates."

When not working to correct the injustices of the world, students were allowed free time to explore the 168-acre grounds of the center, play "Mafia" around the campfire, and engage in community building, interactive games like "Ranky Tanky."

For more information about the Highlander Center or its mission, visit the Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility (ICSR) or www.highlandercenter.org.

"Highlander was a great introduction to addressing social problems in Bowling Green and at WKU. It was also a way to get to know my fellow Honors classmates," sophomore Erin Fleischmann said.

Have Nukes and Trust Government

FAITH MILLS

Areté guest writer

Professors, community members and students of all majors came together March 22 to learn how to think about how to think about the bomb, “big brother,” and international security.

The answer: have nukes and trust government.

Author and political scientist Richard J. Harknett gave his presentation “21st Century International Security: How I Learned to Stop Worrying About the Bomb and Big Brother” in Gary A. Ransdell Hall Auditorium on behalf of the Boyd-Lubker Visiting Scholars Program.

This annual program honors the memory of Western Kentucky University alumni Dr. and Mrs. George Robert Boyd by sharing the expertise of scholars from a broad range of disciplines with the WKU community.

“I ask that you practice some divergent thinking,” Harknett said. “We need to look at how we think about how to think about international security.”

Harknett said that his research shows that nations must practice stable nuclear possession in order for the world to achieve true security and safety from the threat of nuclear attack. He also said that might seem contradictory. But a “nuclear-free world” is impossible because nuclear technology remains present and can’t be avoided.

“We’d have to burn the physics books—line up the physicists and shoot them,” Harknett said, referring to the

premise of nuclear abolition.

He said that states should abandon the conventional “1960s logic” of nuclear abolition.

“It’s all about deterrence,” Harknett said.

Harknett sprinkled his presentation with interesting multimedia features including a clip from the 1960s film “Dr. Strangelove” about the world on the verge of nuclear war in order to define deterrence.

“Deterrence is the art of producing in the mind of the enemy the fear to attack,” he said. “And so, because of the automated and irrevocable decision-making process which rules out human meddling, the ‘Doomsday’ machine is terrifying and simple to understand and completely credible and convincing.”

Harknett’s statements intrigued several students.

Freshman Seth Durham, 19, a mechanical engineering major from Benton, Ky., said he agreed “whole heartedly” with Harknett’s main points.

“To assume that the entire world would on a whim discard their nuclear armaments would be not only negligent but also naïve,” Durham said. “The nuclear market is stable as it stands and should be left alone.”

But some students, including senior political science major Luke Simmons of Auburn, Ky., questioned the viability of such an arms control regime.

“My main concern is the distrust between current nuclear powers, such as the U.S. and Pakistan, as well as

the nuclear developments of states such as Iran, who would be less likely to cooperate with the international community in their efforts,” Simmons said.

However, Alyssa Badinger, 19, sophomore Biology major from Louisville, Ky., had a different outlook.

“Countries aren’t in a position of trust with each other enough to have nuclear abolition,” she said. “I’d rather have a stalemate with deterrence than fear of what your neighbor is building. Grant it, I live in a nation with nuclear weapons.”

Harknett also spent a portion of his presentation addressing the issue of cyber security.

While many often fear the intrusion of “Big Brother”—government—in our online world, Harknett said that the individual poses a much greater threat to the cyber community and its security. He said that people should trust the government in this area in order to avoid a Lord of the Flies outcome in which malicious individuals disrupt lives through cyber breaches.

“He definitely made me think,” she said.



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